

Talking Points

Signing of primary safety belt law (House Bill 409)

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

- History is being made in Mississippi today as we strengthen the law governing protection of occupants in vehicles.
- National statistics show that safety belt use saves lives, prevents debilitating injuries and reduces medical costs.
- House Bill 409 will help Mississippi qualify for more than \$8 million in federal incentives for safety related construction projects upon the reauthorization of the federal highway bill.
- Safety belt use is neither partisan nor regional, neither urban nor rural. It just makes good sense.

Let's look at the numbers:

- Traffic crashes cost our state over \$2.1 billion each year in medical expenses, lost productivity, and property damage. That is \$740 per Mississippian per year.
- 75 percent of these costs are paid by citizens not involved in the crashes.
- In 2003, Mississippi ranked third highest nationally for traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles
- Over 75 percent of all drivers and passengers killed in 2004 were not belted.

- 136 young people ages 15 to 20 were killed in Mississippi in 2004, and more than 82 percent of them were unrestrained.
- Over 35,000 people are injured annually on Mississippi roadways.
- Over 3,000 are incapacitated receiving critical injuries such as spinal cord, traumatic brain injury, loss of limbs and/or permanent disabilities.
- The Mississippi Hospital Association estimates that 60 percent of its members' trauma care is related to motor vehicle accidents.
- Mississippi has the second lowest safety belt use rate in the nation at 60.8 percent. (New Hampshire has no law for safety belts and a use rate of 50 percent.)
- States that pass primary laws see a significant increase in belt use because of education and enforcement.
- When our primary law increases belt use, Mississippi is poised to save over 100 lives and decrease economic losses by almost \$90 million.

Many groups have worked diligently on this, some for years:

Phil Haseltine of the National Safety Council in Washington, DC. Phil also worked with Senators Lott and Cochran on the SAFETEA-Lu bill making sure the incentives would benefit Mississippi.

Key groups in Mississippi:

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety: Commissioner George Phillips, Highway Patrol Chief Marvin Curtis, Ron Sennett, Dr. Billy White and Becky Webster of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety and Planning.

Mississippi Department of Transportation, Commissioners Dick Hall, Wayne Brown and Bill Minor, and Executive Director Butch Brown

Bill sponsors – Sen. Gray Tollison and Rep. Bryant Clark

Chairman Bill Miles of the House Transportation Committee

Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck, Senate President Pro-Tem Travis Little

Mississippi Department of Transportation: Commissioners Bill Minor, Dick Hall and Wayne Brown, and Executive Director Butch Brown; Jim Willis

Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics: Dr. Bill Payne, Dr. Tami Brooks, Gretchen Mahan, Lynn Evans

Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians: Beth Embry

Mississippi State Medical Association: Chairman Thomson Konosky

ER Physicians: Dr. John Cook

Mississippi Nurses Association: Betty Dickson, Ricki Garrett

Mississippi Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving: Danny Berry

Mississippi Safe Kids: Cynthia Huff; Lori Bezada

Nissan North America: Camille Young, Andre McShan

Mississippi Highway Safety Leaders: President Markas Marbury;
Kim

Mississippi Department of Health: Danny Miller

Health Promotion Department: Mary Reed

Mississippi Health Policy Research Center: Art Cosby

AAA: Don Redman

Brain Injury Association of Mississippi: Freida Arender

American Trauma Society of Mississippi: Amber Kyle, president;
Lisa Valadie; Dr. D.H. Short

Head and Spinal Cord Injury Registry: Joe Surkin

AMR: Brent Alexander

City of Jackson

National Association of Black Mayors

National Association of Black Legislators (Mary Coleman)

Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police: Ken Winter

Mississippi Sheriffs Association: Trey Bobinger